

GLOBAL EDUCATION IN TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS: VIEWS FROM PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS

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Abstract

National government education policies in Australia and elsewhere are concerned with preparing citizens who can engage with a global economy and be internationally competitive. For example, the preamble to The Melbourne Declaration (Ministerial Council on Education Employment Training & Youth Affairs [MCEETYA], 2008) focuses on the need for young Australians in the 21st century to consider the global implications of their education. Topics relevant to global education have long been established in social studies syllabi, but the current context provides a strong argument for their inclusion more broadly throughout school curricula. For this to occur, teachers must be adequately prepared, have a good understanding of what global education (GE) is, and how to teach it effectively. A group of teacher educators at one University integrate global perspectives into various teacher education courses in order to raise the profile of global education with pre-service teachers. Research through surveys shows that students' preferred learning directions are not always aligned with GE principles, but awareness of pre-service teacher views on global education has provided direction needed to create better prepared teachers of GE.

Introduction

This study addresses the importance of global education for pre-service teachers in a regional Australian University that is the largest provider of teacher education in the country. The researchers involved felt that the integration of global perspectives in a number of their courses was important in order to ensure that global education became a part of pre-service teachers' regular practice upon graduation. They provided approaches which promoted issues related to equal opportunities, social justice and sustainable development (Robbins, Francis, & Elliott, 2003). Adequate time was given to strategies for teaching about global and controversial issues as well as to ensure students were able to improve understandings and knowledge of global events and knowledges as well as being able to critically evaluate such information. As Holden and Hicks argued, promoting a global dimension in the curriculum should be more than 'lip service' (Holden & Hicks, 2007) – it should be rigorous and open to scrutiny and contestation. The research questions for this study were as follows:

How do Teacher Education (TE) students perceive the importance of Global Education?

How are these perceptions affected by actions of educator researchers?

What do students learn about GE in TE programs at one University?

What aspects of GE would TE students like to learn more about?

Global perspectives can ensure students are equipped with the knowledge, skills and values for life beyond University, and therefore ought to be a part of all higher education courses. A wider awareness of the world around them, an awareness of diversity and respect for differences will mean they are more likely to contribute as global citizens. The Global Perspectives in Higher Education project in the United Kingdom (UK) (2004-2006) found that, despite the fact that global perspectives were identified as important and relevant in teaching at the undergraduate level in University courses,

the embedding of these was challenging and diverse (Lunn, 2008). This is nowhere more urgent than in teacher education.

Living as we do in an age of multi-media and instantly available international communication, our school children are exposed to global issues as never before. The Australian government (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009) is concerned with preparing citizens who can engage with a global economy and this concern is shared by other federal governments including the UK and United States (US) (Townsend, 2011). This requires having an understanding of global issues, and having the skills to communicate and interact effectively in such a context. An important part of school education, therefore, is learning about global issues, as exemplified in the preamble to *The Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (MCEETYA, 2008) with its focus on the need for young Australians in the 21st century to consider the global implications of their education. The Melbourne Declaration also argues that global mobility and technological progress has created opportunities to address global economic markets and nurture a sense of global citizenship. Such topics have long been established in social studies syllabi, but the current context provides a strong argument for their inclusion more broadly throughout school curricula. For this to occur, our teachers must be adequately prepared, requiring them to have a good understanding of what global education (GE) is, and how to teach it effectively.

What is global education?

Global education is defined as an approach to education which seeks to enable young people to participate in shaping a better shared future for the world through:

- Emphasising the unity and interdependence of human society
- Developing a sense of self and appreciation of cultural diversity
- Affirming social justice and human rights, peace building and actions for a sustainable future
- Emphasising developing relationships with our global neighbours
- Promoting open-mindedness and a predisposition to take action for change

(Curriculum Corporation, 2008, p.2)

In addressing these themes it is important that teacher educators embrace a critical approach. This involves clarifying perspectives on the two main teaching approaches to GE; the skills based approach and the notion of a critical and a social justice focussed global education (Wang, Lin, Spalding, Odell, & Klecka, 2011). They argue that there is one group of educators who focus on globalisation as about factors associated with economic imperatives and thus global education must primarily focus on developing national capacity to be economically competitive at a global level. The focus from this perspective is to develop a skilled workforce focused on skills associated with maths, science, technology, languages and intercultural communication. This skills based approach is often accompanied by standardised outcomes, assessment and professional teaching and teacher standards aimed at enforcing compliance. The alternative perspective on globalisation focuses on it as a negative force associated with profit making for multinational corporations resulting in detrimental implications for the entire globe if not addressed. This version of globalisation appears to be connected to the notion of a critical global education with many seeing globalisation as first world domination of the third world in economic integration, environmental stewardship, cultural encounters and governance and citizenship (Myers 2010). The latter view perceives education as being not only about economic competitiveness but vital for developing citizens committed to social justice and human rights advocates within a democratic process. Teacher education within this latter perspective would focus on helping teachers generate changes in culturally and linguistically complex classrooms using critical, personal and professional knowledge (Authors). Teacher educators are challenged to address both perspectives or at least clarify for future students the issues that arise.

Teacher education and global education

Teacher education programs are, like school curricula, increasingly crowded. Pre-service teachers must learn content, theory, programming and assessment skills, classroom management strategies and communication skills. They must become proficient with technology for administrative, learning and teaching purposes. How and when do they learn how to implement global education foci? The area of GE is broad, having commonalities with civics and citizenship education, Asian studies, environmental education, language education and values education. It encompasses political procedures and attitudes, environmental perspectives and knowledge of languages and cultural identities (Curriculum Corporation, 2008). Education for globalisation does not fit into any single curriculum box and must address knowledge, skills and values if it is to be effective. In university programs where knowledge tends to be tied up in individual course outlines, teaching for global citizenship through global education is a particularly daunting challenge.

Few teacher education programs worldwide promote GE (Tye, 1999), with the most progressive of those being in the United States (US). US educators, however, generally did not call for radical global reshaping in their approaches (Pike, 2000). Educators in the UK have been concerned with developing world-minded students as far back as the 1920s, yet a poll of UK teenagers found television to be the greatest source of information on global issues ahead of school or any other source (MORI, 1998). Worldwide it seems that those training to be secondary teachers specialising in social studies or similar courses will cover global issues to a reasonable extent, while those in training for other secondary specialisations may receive little or no direct instruction in GE. A study of UK pre-service teacher attitudes to education for global citizenship found significant differences depending on specialisations (Robbins et al., 2003), with those studying geography having the most positive attitudes, and maths specialists having the least positive. Primary pre-service teachers will encounter aspects of GE when they cover social studies as one of several curriculum areas but there are difficulties in leaving this important aspect to an increasingly marginalised area of the curriculum. Additionally the difficulty of adequately preparing teachers to deliver GE content is highlighted if we consider the demographics of pre-service teacher cohorts. These university students who we need to teach future generations about multiculturalism and diversity (among many other things) are usually middle class Anglo Australian (Allard & Santoro, 2006). While the general population becomes increasingly diverse ethnically, linguistically and culturally, pre-service teachers are an increasingly homogeneous group (Santoro, Kamler, & Reid, 2001). Beliefs which have formed with a person's identity over the course of 18 plus years will not be easily modified (or radically challenged) by a few hours of teaching and learning. Indeed, in the case of multiculturalism and diversity, typical add-on approaches in teacher education programs have been unsuccessful, with stereotypical perceptions often reinforced rather than challenged (Garmon, 2004; Haberman, 1991; Mills, 2008). Implementing a GE program in preservice programs is therefore a daunting challenge.

The Global Education Research and Teaching Project

With support from AUSAID, the Australian Government overseas aid program, a group of academics working on teacher education programs formed a Global Education Research and Teaching (GERT) team to augment global education in their teacher education programs. Resources were provided which were used with and distributed to pre-service teachers in the group's courses along with independently sourced materials.

Participating academics were selected based on their participation in a number of global education initiatives. Team members chose the courses where they could best incorporate a GE approach. In this way academics teaching into the secondary, primary and early childhood programs across three campuses were involved. Courses related to the secondary specialisation of HSIE (Social Studies) were included. Primary and EC initial implementation began with HSIE, English and Integrated curriculum courses and expanded to incorporate professional experience and mathematics courses in subsequent years. GE emphases were selected for inclusion in each course according to their

relevance which enabled a significant coverage without repetition. The GE focus was more explicit in some courses than others, particularly in social studies where many of the learning emphases are obvious in the curriculum documents. In other courses, for example primary / early childhood English curriculum, global education perspectives were included by looking at the cultural context of language use as well as integrating some children's literature incorporating global education perspectives. The integrated curriculum course examined equity and diversity in inclusive classrooms and specifically taught integrated curriculum planning using multi-level pedagogies such as the inclusive strategy of cooperative learning. Secondary courses also had differing approaches of how and where to incorporate global education, including an Economics course where students evaluated the consequences of contemporary economic problems and issues on individuals, firms and governments. A Year 7-10 History course taught about informed and active citizenship in order to value and appreciate the opportunity to contribute to a just society.

Study Design

Responses to surveys conducted with pre-service teachers in various courses where global education foci were embedded are examined.. Results related to the students' perceptions of the importance of GE in these courses, the students' perceptions of the knowledge and understandings they developed, and their perceptions on what else they would like to learn in relation to GE. The results provided intelligence on the effectiveness of our efforts to date, and suggested future potentially useful approaches.

The surveys were completed by students enrolled in a number of primary and secondary teacher education courses. Over 900 surveys in total were collected over the initial two years of the GE project to determine student responses to the initiative and provide direction for the ongoing work of the group. Students who had not previously been enrolled in a course with a GE focus completed an initial survey designed to determine how important they perceived this topic to be for them as future teachers. At the end of each course another survey was completed to ascertain effective strategies in incorporating GE and what aspects of GE students wanted to learn more about. As surveys were collected over four semesters, some students completing the surveys had completed a number of courses incorporating GE, while others were completing their first one.

Demographic information and students' rating of the importance of GE according to a Likert scale were analysed using the Statistics Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) statistical analysis program. Mean ratings of importance were compared between courses using ANOVA with Scheffe posthoc. Qualitative responses to the open questions were coded according to evident themes using NVivo. A preliminary exploratory analysis enabled us to consider the general sense of the data and consider how to organise this initial examination.

Results

Student ratings of Global Education importance

A Likert-type scale was used for students to rate the importance of Global Education to their course/program: 1=very little through to 5=very high. Means for each course were calculated, and a range of results was found, from 3.65 up to 4.84. Students studying secondary geography rated GE importance highest, which is not surprising as they have selected to study this particular subject (where GE is particularly and obviously relevant), presumably because they have a particular interest in it. The lowest rating was provided by first year primary English students, which is also not unexpected. The course content has no overt link to GE, so the GE inclusion was deliberately implicit.

Students who had progressed further through their programs perceived GE to be increasingly important, with the exception of the secondary geography course (see Table 1 for an illustrative sample). Standard deviations were greatest for primary pre-service teachers in their first and second years, perhaps showing their early understanding.

Table One

Mean Importance of GE by Course

Course surveyed	Mean	Number of surveys	Std Deviation
1 st /2 nd year primary English curriculum	3.65	148	1.12
2 nd year primary classroom management (professional experience)	3.72	133	1.02
2 nd year secondary geography	4.84	19	.375
2 nd year secondary history	3.90	146	.885
3 rd year primary social studies (offering 1) (offering 2)	4.17 3.90	54 164	.694 .870
3 rd year primary inclusive practice (professional experience)	4.46	41	.745
4 th year primary literacies	4.35	31	.551
4 th year secondary senior geography	4.22	9	.667

Comparison of means between courses showed some significant differences. Secondary geography students (mean 4.84) rated the importance of GE significantly higher than students in primary English (mean 3.65, sig .002) and classroom management (mean 3.72, sig .009) courses. Students in a primary course about inclusive practices (mean 4.46) also rated the importance of GE significantly higher than students in the primary English (mean 3.65, sig .007) and classroom management (mean 3.72, sig .035) courses. Table 2 summarises these figures.

Table Two

Differences between courses

Course and mean	Compared course and mean	Sig
2 nd year secondary geography 4.84	1 st year primary English curriculum 3.65	.002
	2 nd year primary classroom management (professional experience) 3.72	.009
3 rd year primary inclusive practices 4.46	1 st year primary English curriculum 3.65	.007

	2 nd year primary classroom management (professional experience) 3.72	.035
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Another interesting result from the analysis showed a non-significant difference in perceived importance between two offerings of the same course. The primary social studies course was surveyed in two separate years, with ratings of 4.17 and 3.90. The content in this course has high connections to GE, so the 3.90 result was lower than expected. That result, however, was obtained in a year when the course was presented by a staff member with no previous involvement in the GE group. It is likely that less emphasis was placed by the lecturer on relevant GE concepts, although we cannot rule out other causes. It may well be that we as lecturers in GE improved our practice over time.

Reported student knowledge and future needs

Students responded to questions about their knowledge of GE in courses they had undertaken and their future learning preferences in relation to GE. We were able to categorise the resulting responses into the following broad themes: 'World view', 'Classroom view' and 'Beginner view'. Student responses we categorised as 'World view' included ideas related to ensuring multiple perspectives, multiculturalism, international issues and commonalities across cultures. Responses we categorised as indicative of a 'Classroom view' covered such aspects as learning environment, resources and pedagogies. The 'Beginner view' indicated limitations in students' knowledge of GE, acknowledging they had more to learn. Many of the latter comments were from students who had only experienced one GE course, and from the evidence of the previous data we would expect more knowledge would be gained in future courses. A small number of responses indicated a lack of interest in GE. Many responses related to overlapping themes; for example we considered that resources could relate to either the world view or classroom view and so we included these responses in both

The results of this aspect of the survey reflected these preservice teachers' focus on classroom readiness. Most evident by far was the 'Classroom view' followed by the 'World view' and, least evident, the 'Beginner view' (5%). Responses to the first question (What did you learn about global education in your course?) tended to be course specific, reflecting the team's approach of incorporating aspects of GE which are relevant to each course. Responses to the second question (What would you like to learn about in relation to global education?) did not appear to be influenced by course.

Classroom view

The dominance of the 'Classroom view' appears to be related to the type of courses involved being mostly related to curriculum and professional experience. These students were preparing for work in classrooms, so it is logical for that to be their main focus in learning. Three themes emerged in the 'Classroom view' regarding both what students had already learnt, and wanted to learn more about, being pedagogies, resources and diversity. They had also learnt about inclusivity and conflict resolution, and wanted to learn more about Connected Classrooms (an ICT innovation), teaching controversial or sensitive issues, and teaching in other countries.

Responses indicating they had learnt teaching strategies were mainly from students enrolled in primary professional experience and social studies curriculum courses. Students said they had learnt how to teach GE focussed lessons and integrate GE themes in lessons, units of work and programs:

to incorporate cultural knowledge across key learning areas.

They still wanted to learn more in relation to this as indicated by comments on aspects they wanted to

learn more about:

How to teach or incorporate education from other countries.

They were particularly keen to understand more about pedagogies used around the world:

I would like to learn about different pedagogical approaches used globally.

Almost a third of ‘Classroom view’ responses reported that students had learnt about useful resources for teaching GE including children’s literature, technology and visual images. Specific documents provided by AUSAID were also acknowledged in courses where these were distributed:

...great texts that could be used to create an understanding of global education

Students were keen to learn more about resources to help them teach GE.

Responses related to diversity and inclusivity in the ‘Classroom view’ came mostly from students in a primary professional experience course with a classroom management focus, probably because of its emphasis on knowing the individual children in classes. They had learnt

...ways of including cultural diversity in classrooms, being aware of the students of my class.

They were also keen to understand more about diversity, particularly about cultural differences and perspectives:

Learning common issues that can transcend through different cultures and therefore be taught in multiple places.

Some references indicated that cultural understanding and information was required to support them with planning for diversity in their classrooms:

How to engage with children of different cultural and ethnic backgrounds to ensure that I can easily and correctly communicate ideas and lessons successfully.

World view

‘World view’ responses indicated that students had both learnt about and wanted to learn more about diversity and international issues. They had also learnt about human rights, ‘connectedness’, multiculturalism, conflict resolution, cultural commonalities, cultural aspects and inclusivity. They were keen to learn other languages and more cultural knowledge.

International issues in the ‘World view’ responses were most often from students in social studies courses (primary and secondary) and a primary literacy course. Students in those and a mathematics course claimed to have gained knowledge about *issues happening around the world*.

Students wanted more knowledge about international issues, particularly environmental issues and also in relation to relating this to their global responsibilities:

How what is going on in the world affects us beyond what we know.

Students in primary professional experience and social studies curriculum courses reported learning about cultural differences:

...different perspectives, the way culture, country of origin, gender, traditions shape our view of the world.

They wanted to learn more about:

Just a broad understanding of all aspects of world and cultures.

Students were keen to know more about diversity, particularly cultural differences in order to develop cultural understandings:

Different cultures, beliefs, religions and practice.

Commonalities across cultural backgrounds had been learnt about by primary professional experience courses and social studies courses (both primary and secondary), but also from literacy and mathematics courses. They included comments about children's needs and behaviour:

to be inclusive of all children's needs ... in relation to universal behaviour management ,

and links between cultural communities:

local community is part of a greater whole.

Students in the primary mathematics course noted the universal relevance of mathematical language and practice:

mathematics holds a universal language and recognisable strategies that are used worldwide.

Some students (mainly from an advanced primary literacy course, but also from mathematics and secondary geography courses) noted the importance of global responsibility and citizenship:

... need to be global citizens and active participants in our world.

References to the environment also came mostly from the advanced primary literacy course, with students referring explicitly to:

sustainable futures and the importance of maintaining the environment

A small number of students wanted more knowledge about controversial or sensitive issues, particularly anti-racism programs and how to sensitively implement GE within challenging issues:

Controversial issues or cultural acceptance issues.

The world view responses also demonstrated developing knowledge about considering *multiple perspectives*, with comments coming from students in primary literacy, social studies and professional experience courses. References to having learnt about *social justice, human rights and values* came solely from primary social studies students.

Beginner view

The Beginner view responses indicated that some students had learnt little (10 responses) or nothing (12 responses) about GE. These comments came mainly from first and second year primary/EC students in courses where the GE was implicitly incorporated due to the nature of the courses. Responses such as *not covered in detail enough* are not necessarily negative as they may be an acknowledgement that this important area deserves more focus. Eleven comments claiming students (mainly from a professional experience course but even including one student from a social studies course) had learnt *nothing* about GE left academics wondering where these students were during classes; likewise two responses stating they didn't know what GE was.

Conclusion

The approach taken with GE in this study shows early signs of success and student ratings of the importance of GE generally increased with progression throughout the teacher education programs.

Student reports as to what they have learnt about GE do reflect teaching foci for each course, with not too much repetition evident. Students did want to learn more about GE, with only isolated responses indicating a lack of interest. It appears that the course-related integration of GE is effective.

Student comments regarding what they want to learn for the future reassure us that courses students will undertake in the future will hopefully satisfy their needs and wants. Many students in their first GE course (in first or second year) refer to aspects of global education that will be covered in later courses. There are far fewer references to the world view than the classroom view in what they want to learn, indicating their need to feel well prepared to teach their immediate classes rather than understand wider global issues. It reassures us that future teachers are aware of and interested in providing such global perspectives in their teaching .although we are aware that a stronger worldwide perspective on global education would probably reap greater benefits from a national policy perspective.

The dominance of our students' interest in aspects of GE related to classrooms is unsurprising. Many courses surveyed have a strong focus on the classroom, and that is where these students expect to spend their professional lives. This data has led to discussion among GERT members as to how we can meet students' requests for a stronger worldview (for example, by providing more information related to teaching overseas). Whether this interest is really addressing the principles of GE, or simply a pragmatic interest of students hoping to teach overseas in the future is unclear but even if it is pragmatic on the students' part, we may be able to make use of that in further promoting GE. After all, many of us developed our interest in global education through pragmatic global experiences. Overall the results of student surveys indicated their growing realisation of the need for global perspectives in teacher planning and an interest in acquiring skills associated with global education. It provides incentives for us as teacher educators to redouble our efforts to strengthen this element of our future teachers' skills.

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